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# The “Furry” Phenomenon: Characterizing Sexual Orientation, Sexual Motivation, and Erotic Target Identity Inversions in Male Furies

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## Abstract

*Furries* are individuals who are especially interested in anthropomorphic or cartoon animals (e.g., Bugs Bunny). They often strongly identify with anthropomorphic animals and create *fursonas*, identities of themselves as those anthropomorphic animals. Some practice *fursuiting*, or wearing costumes that resemble anthropomorphic animals. Furies have been portrayed as sexually motivated in the media and popular culture, although little empirical research has addressed this issue. If some furies are sexually motivated, they may be motivated by an erotic target identity inversion (ETII): sexual arousal by the fantasy of being the same kinds of individuals to whom they are sexually attracted. Furies with ETIIs would experience both sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals and sexual arousal by fantasizing about being anthropomorphic animals, because they often change their appearance and behavior to become more like anthropomorphic animals. We surveyed 334 male furies recruited from the Internet about their sexual orientation, sexual motivation, and sexual interests. A large majority of our sample reported non-heterosexual identities (84%) and some degree of sexual motivation for being furies (99%). Male furies also tended to report a pattern of sexual interests consistent with an ETII involving anthropomorphic animals. Both sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals and sexual arousal by fantasizing about being anthropomorphic animals were nearly universal. Furthermore, male furies tended to be sexually aroused by fantasizing about being the same kinds of anthropomorphic animals to whom they were sexually attracted, with respect to gender and species. This sexual motivation and these unusual sexual interests do not justify discrimination or stigmatization.

**Keywords** Furies · Sexual orientation · Sexual motivation · Erotic target identity inversions · Autogynephilia · Paraphilias

## Introduction

*Furries* are individuals who are especially interested in anthropomorphic or cartoon animals (e.g., Bugs Bunny; Gerbasi et al., 2008; Půtová, 2013; Roberts, Plante, Gerbasi, & Reysen, 2015). They are often involved in the *furry community*, which creates and consumes art, media, and stories depicting anthropomorphic animals. As part of the furry community, they sometimes meet in person and attend events ranging from small gatherings to large conventions. Although the large conventions tend to receive the most publicity (e.g., Gurley, 2001), most furies primarily interact with each other online rather than in person.

Many furies strongly identify with anthropomorphic animals of one or more species and create *fursonas*, identities of themselves as those anthropomorphic animals (Gerbasi et al., 2008; Půtová, 2013; Roberts et al., 2015). They primarily enact their fursonas online, although they sometimes do so in person. Some may even wear entire costumes, *fursuits*, which resemble their fursonas. Fursuits look similar to the costumes worn by mascots of athletic teams or theme parks. Because fursuits are expensive, furies tend to own only parts of a fursuit, such as the paws, feet, ears, or tail, rather than the entire fursuit. Some furies also wear human clothing, such as shirts or pants, over their fursuits, which further exemplifies the anthropomorphic nature of their fursonas. The practice of wearing fursuits is called *fursuiting*. Although furies are commonly associated with fursuiting, many express their interest in anthropomorphic animals by creating fursonas, engaging with the furry community, or drawing and looking at furry artwork instead.

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## Are Furies Sexually Motivated?

In the media and popular culture, furies have been portrayed as sexually motivated (Gerbasi et al., 2008; Plante, Roberts, Reysen, & Gerbasi, 2014; Roberts et al., 2015). News stories and television shows have depicted fursuiting and attending conventions in particular as focused on sex. For instance, a news story in *Vanity Fair* included interviews with several furies at a convention, who claimed that there was widespread sexual activity or described their sexual fantasies related to being an anthropomorphic animal (Gurley, 2001). An episode of the once popular television show *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* also brought significant attention to furies from the general public (Zuiker, Stahl, & Lewis, 2003). In the episode, furies are mainly shown attending a convention to have sex with other furies in their fursuits. More informally, furies tend to be associated with unusual sexual interests or practices, such as bestiality, when described online by individuals who are not furies themselves (Brookey & Cannon, 2009).

Portrayals of furies in the media and popular culture may be biased by preconceptions and thus inaccurate. Some furies especially object to the way that they are depicted in the *Vanity Fair* story (Gurley, 2001) and the *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* episode (Zuiker et al., 2003), because they believe that there is undue emphasis on sexuality, such as the idea that furies go to conventions primarily to have sex with each other in fursuits. Three other observations, however, suggest that furies are not only sexually motivated, but also sexually attracted to anthropomorphic animals. First, several major Web sites that cater to furies (e.g., FurAffinity, Inkbunny, SoFurry) provide outlets for sharing erotic art, media, and stories featuring anthropomorphic animals. Second, tongue-in-cheek terms like *yiff* and *furvert* have been popularized among furies to refer humorously to erotic art and media depicting anthropomorphic animals and to those who consume it, respectively (Gurley, 2001; “Yiff,” 2015). Finally, in an informal online survey of 276 furies, a majority of respondents (79%) reported that their interest in being furies was sexual to some extent (Evans, 2008). Although the wording of the relevant question was somewhat ambiguous (“Is your interest in furry of a sexual or non-sexual nature?”), the researcher clarified that he was asking about “a more general interest in anthropomorphic animals for sexual reasons, such as arousal from erotic anthropomorphic animal art” (p. 17). He also recruited furies only from Web sites without an erotic focus. Reassuringly, his results were consistent with those of two more recent surveys, one of 4338 furies indiscriminately recruited online (Plante, Mock, Reysen, & Gerbasi, 2011) and another of 912 furies recruited at a large furry convention (Schroy,

Plante, Reysen, Roberts, & Gerbasi, 2016). In both surveys, sexual motivation of some degree was commonly reported, characterizing over 50% of Plante et al.’s (2011) sample.

Furies sometimes report that they are not sexually motivated, especially in their interviews with the media (Stewart, 2016). As a result, recent news stories have deemphasized sex in their portrayal of furies, if they address sexual motivation at all (e.g., Broderick, 2014; Erbenraut, 2014; Wall, 2016; Winterman, 2009). Some articles have even asserted that furies do not have any sexual motivation, unusual sexual interests, or unusual sexual practices. The recent tendency for both furies and the media to minimize or completely deny sexual motivation may represent a response to social stigma. This stigma is partly due to the early media portrayals of furies that emphasized unusual sexual interests and practices (e.g., Gurley, 2001; Zuiker et al., 2003), which are stigmatized in and of themselves (e.g., BDSM; Wright, 2006). Non-furies do tend to perceive furies negatively (Roberts, Plante, Reysen, & Gerbasi, 2016), and furies tend to perceive that they are stigmatized (Kington, 2015; Plante et al., 2015; Roberts et al., 2015). Furthermore, many furies worry about the negative consequences of revealing their identity as a furry (Mock, Plante, Reysen, & Gerbasi, 2013; Roberts et al., 2015). Thus, furies may wish to downplay any sexual motivation that might exist in order to reduce social stigma. For similar reasons, they may also be cautious about, if not hostile toward, media and research that address the possibility of sexual motivation.

What else might motivate furies besides sexuality? The fact that furies are often part of a community with shared interests suggests that they might be socially rather than (or in addition to) sexually motivated. Indeed, the gatherings and conventions organized by furies are open to the public and advertised as non-sexual. Some individuals may therefore be furies because they want the feeling of belonging and the social support that come with being a part of the furry community. They may also be socially motivated in other ways, such as having friends, romantic partners, or sexual partners who are furies. The fact that some furies create and consume art, media, and stories without sexual content is consistent with non-sexual motivation, including non-sexual interest in anthropomorphic animals or in being an anthropomorphic animal.

Some studies have suggested that social interactions as part of the furry community online and in person constitute a significant source of social support for many furies (Mock et al., 2013; Reysen, Plante, Roberts, & Gerbasi, 2016; Roberts et al., 2015; Satinsky & Green, 2016). These studies have also suggested that furies tend to feel that belonging to the furry community is an important part of their identity, and that most strongly identify with being furies. Still, the fact that Web sites catering to furies often include erotic content created by furies suggests that sexual motivation is

not uncommon. In contrast, most activities that are widely considered to be socially motivated, such as following specific sports teams or music groups, show little indication of sexual motivation. Schroy et al. (2016), for example, found that furies from a large furry convention were more likely to report sexual motivation than were fantasy sport fans from Amazon Mechanical Turk, a Web site used by people to make small sums of money for completing surveys. It is thus likely that furies are both socially and sexually motivated.

We are not the first to suggest that sexual motivation may be related to being a furry, but social or other motivations may exist alongside it. In an article published in this journal, Soh and Cantor (2015) documented a visit to a furry convention, from which they conclude that sexual motivation constitutes only one part of being a furry. Their conclusion seems to be reasonable and nuanced in light of the claims that furies are either completely sexually motivated or not at all sexually motivated. Even if their conclusion is correct, however, two major questions remain: To what extent are furies sexually motivated, and what explains any sexual motivation? Regarding the second question, we doubt that most people would find the prospect of behaving or dressing like an anthropomorphic animal to be sexually arousing. Assuming that some furies do experience sexual arousal in this context, the question remains why. In the next section, we elaborate on a promising concept that may help answer this question.

### Are Furies Sexually Motivated by an Erotic Target Identity Inversion?

By fursuiting and enacting their fursonas, furies change their appearance and behavior to become more like anthropomorphic animals. In these ways, they are similar to male cross-dressers, who change their appearance and behavior to become more like women. Heterosexual male cross-dressers are by definition sexually attracted to women, and their cross-dressing is sexually motivated (Bailey, 2003; Blanchard, 1991; Blanchard, Racansky, & Steiner, 1986; Hsu, Rosenthal, & Bailey, 2015; Hsu, Rosenthal, Miller, & Bailey, 2017; Lawrence, 2013). Specifically, they have *autogynephilia*: the propensity to be sexually aroused by the fantasy of being a woman (Blanchard, 1989a).

Autogynephilia can be conceptualized as an erotic target identity inversion (ETII), in which an external erotic target (e.g., women) is located within a man's own body (Blanchard, 1991; Freund & Blanchard, 1993; Lawrence, 2009). Because women are the preferred erotic targets of most men, autogynephilia is likely to be the most common form of ETII (Blanchard, 1993). In autogynephilia, men who are otherwise sexually attracted to women internalize their attraction to some degree, such that they are sexually aroused by the fantasy of being a woman. Men with ETIIs such as

autogynephilia vary in the degree to which they retain sexual attraction to their external erotic target (Blanchard, 1989b, 1992). Among men with ETIIs who are capable of sexual attraction to other individuals, the external and internal erotic targets are similar. For example, autogynephilic men are sexually attracted to actual women, if they are attracted to other individuals at all, in addition to being sexually aroused by the fantasy of being a woman. Thus, ETIIs reflect the movement from completely external to completely internal attraction on a dimension of male sexual orientation that may be considered an erotic target's location (Blanchard, 2015; Hsu & Bailey, 2017; Seto, 2017).

Consistent with the concept of ETIIs, there is a strong tendency for autogynephilic men to report sexual attraction to women (e.g., Blanchard, 1992; Hsu et al., 2015). Because men have such a high base rate of sexual attraction to women, however, such findings are not compelling evidence for the concept of ETIIs. Two other less common phenomena provide more persuasive evidence: men who desire limb amputation, and men sexually attracted to children. Lawrence (2006) argued that men who desire limb amputation are sexually motivated by *apotemnophilia*, or sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an amputee (Money, Jobaris, & Furth, 1977), and that apotemnophilia is an ETII. Indeed, men who desire limb amputation tend to report both sexual attraction to amputees and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an amputee, consistent with the concept of ETIIs (First, 2005). Recently, Hsu and Bailey (2017) examined whether some men sexually attracted to children were also sexually aroused by the fantasy of being a child, which might represent an ETII that Lawrence (2006, 2009) has called *autopedophilia*. Their results were also consistent with the concept of ETIIs: Men sexually attracted to children were much more commonly and intensely aroused by the fantasy of being a child than they were by the fantasy of being a woman, despite the fact that autogynephilia is likely the more common ETII in general. Neither the tendency for apotemnophilic men to be especially attracted to amputees, nor the tendency for men attracted to children to be especially autopedophilic can be explained by high base rates, in contrast to the tendency for autogynephilic men to be especially attracted to women.

Previous researchers have observed the potential for ETIIs to motivate men to change their appearance and behavior to become more like their internalized erotic targets (Bailey, 2003; Blanchard, 1989a, 1991; Freund & Blanchard, 1993; Hsu & Bailey, 2017; Hsu et al., 2015; Lawrence, 2006, 2009, 2013). Some men's motivation is so powerful that they opt for expensive and life-changing medical procedures to transform themselves into facsimiles of the erotic targets. Autogynephilia, for example, most commonly motivates men to cross-dress (Bailey, 2003; Blanchard, 1991; Blanchard et al., 1986; Hsu et al., 2015, 2017; Lawrence, 2013). Some autogynephilic men are further

motivated to obtain sex reassignment surgery in order to permanently change their bodies into those of women (Bailey, 2003; Blanchard, 1991; Freund & Blanchard, 1993; Lawrence, 2009, 2013).

It is unlikely that ETIIs are limited to autogynephilia, apotemnophilia, and autopedophilia. Indeed, the concept of ETIIs is promising for investigating phenomena in which men change their appearance or behavior to become more like other kinds of persons or things, especially when there is reason to believe such changes are sexually motivated. The behaviors of some male furries, including fursuiting and enacting their fursonas, could be motivated by an ETII, similar to how cross-dressing in autogynephilic men is motivated by an ETII. If some male furries are motivated by an ETII, then they should experience both sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals (*anthropomorphozoophilia*) and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal (*autoanthropomorphozoophilia*). This is because anthropomorphic animals comprise the external erotic target, which would be internalized as the ETII. Because erotic content featuring anthropomorphic animals is not uncommon on popular Web sites that cater to furries, there is precedent to believing that some male furries are sexually attracted to anthropomorphic animals. Because furries often change their appearance and behavior to become more like anthropomorphic animals, there is also precedent for believing that some male furries are sexually aroused by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal. Real animals share some physical similarity with anthropomorphic animals, suggesting that some male furries may additionally experience both sexual attraction to real animals (*zoophilia*) and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a real animal (*autozoophilia*), if they are motivated by an ETII. In one previous online survey of 276 furries, 17% endorsed zoophilic attraction (Evans, 2008).

Freund and Blanchard (1993) provided the only case report of an individual who might have had something resembling an ETII in furries. A man named R reported sexual fantasies of being an anthropomorphic dog named Puppy Smith. He also masturbated to the plush animal that represented Puppy Smith in his fantasies. Consistent with the concept of ETIIs, R appeared to be both sexually attracted to an anthropomorphic dog and sexually aroused by the fantasy of himself as that same anthropomorphic dog. Online magazines have since described men sexually attracted to plush animals who are also sexually aroused by the fantasy of being a plush animal (e.g., Gurley, 2001; Hill, 2000). Importantly, sexual attraction to plush animals appears to be distinct from sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals, although they are related. Lawrence (2009) speculated that sexual attraction to plush animals might be a specific form of sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals, because plush animals often represent anthropomorphic animals. If this were the case, there should be more individuals sexually attracted to

anthropomorphic animals among those sexually attracted to plush animals than the reverse.

There is one notable difference between a possible ETII in male furries and the three previously mentioned ETIIs that have been formally studied: autogynephilia, apotemnophilia, and autopedophilia. For each of the latter ETIIs, men with the relevant preferred erotic target were well known in the scientific literature before the corresponding ETII was studied. Specifically, men sexually attracted to women, to amputees, and to children were well known before the study of autogynephilia, apotemnophilia, and autopedophilia, respectively. In contrast, men sexually attracted to anthropomorphic animals are currently not well known, at least in the scientific literature, and their existence has been posited mainly because the concept of ETIIs as applied to male furries suggests so. Of course, this does not mean that such men have not existed, but rather that they have not yet been noticed by researchers.

## The Present Study

We had three primary goals for the present study. First, we characterized male furries with respect to their sexual orientation, referring herein to its conventional understanding as relative sexual attraction to men versus women. Such information provides a general profile of male furries' sexuality in a conventional framework. Second, we examined whether and to what extent male furries are sexually motivated. Third, we examined the extent to which the concept of ETIIs explains any sexual motivation of male furries.

Regarding our third goal, several key predictions about male furries and their sexual interests follow from the concept of ETIIs. Most importantly, male furries should be both sexually attracted to anthropomorphic animals and sexually aroused by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal. In addition, because furries change their appearance and behavior to become more like anthropomorphic animals rather than actual animals or women, male furries should be more commonly and intensely aroused by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal than they should by the fantasy of being an actual animal or a woman. Furthermore, the concept of ETIIs suggests that male furries might be especially sexually aroused by the fantasy of being the same kinds of anthropomorphic animals (e.g., female anthropomorphic animals, anthropomorphic wolves) to whom they are sexually attracted.

Our study was conducted using a large sample of male furries recruited from the Internet. For the present study, we restricted our sample of furries to men, because the large majority of furries are young and male (Evans, 2008; Gerbasi et al., 2008; Plante et al., 2011; Satinsky & Green, 2016). ETIIs have also been hypothesized to be paraphilias (Freund & Blanchard, 1993), and paraphilias are much more likely to occur in men (Abel & Osborn, 1992; Bailey & Hsu, 2017;



Baur et al., 2016; Dawson, Bannerman, & Lalumière, 2016; Joyal & Carpentier, 2017).

## Method

### Participants

Furries were recruited for an anonymous online questionnaire via advertisements initially placed on select Web sites and blogs that cater to furries, such as FurAffinity and Dogpatch Press. They were also encouraged to send the questionnaire to other furries and to post it on other Web sites that furries frequent.

Respondents reported the gender with which they identified, choosing among *male*, *female*, *male-to-female transgender/transsexual*, *female-to-male transgender/transsexual*, or *other*. If they reported their gender as “other,” respondents provided open-ended responses that explained their choice. The large majority of 440 respondents (89.1%) reported their gender as male, 6.4% as female, 3.0% as “other,” and less than 1% each as male-to-female or female-to-male transgender/transsexual. This initial report focuses on the male furries, who were both much more numerous than the female furries and more likely to be motivated by paraphilias such as ETIIs (Abel & Osborn, 1992; Bailey & Hsu, 2017; Baur et al., 2016; Dawson et al., 2016; Joyal & Carpentier, 2017). We intend to examine and report on female respondents alongside those from similar studies we have conducted in a future article. The transgender/transsexual groups were too small, and the “other” group was too heterogeneous in open-ended responses (e.g., agender, genderqueer) to provide useful or reliable information.

Respondents were asked whether they did or did not identify as furries as part of the questionnaire. Because this initial report focuses on male *furries*, we excluded respondents who did not identify as furries from most analyses. Based on a reviewer’s suggestion, however, we provide some comparisons between male respondents who did and did not identify as furries, because those comparisons were revealing with regard to our goals for the present study.

Excluding respondents who did not report that they were male ( $n = 48$ ) or did not identify as furries ( $n = 63$ ), the resulting sample comprised 334 male furries ( $M$  age = 22.47 years,  $SD = 4.72$ ) and were deemed participants in the present study. Of these participants, 216 (64.7%) reported that they were recruited via an Internet forum for furries, 28 (8.4%) reported that they were recruited via word of mouth from someone who they knew, 27 (8.1%) reported that they were recruited via Dogpatch Press, and 21 (6.3%) reported that they were recruited via FurAffinity. The remaining 42 participants (12.6%) reported some other recruitment sources, such as

different Internet forums for furries. Participants received no compensation.

### Measures

Participants completed an anonymous questionnaire online, which took about half an hour. The questionnaire included several questions that assessed the extent and the development of their interest in being furries. However, it focused mainly on three categories of self-report items: (1) sexual orientation, (2) sexual interests related to being a furry, and (3) sexual interests related to ETIIs that might be found in male furries. These three categories corresponded with our three primary goals for the study: (1) to characterize the sexual orientation of male furries, (2) to examine whether and to what extent male furries are sexually motivated, and (3) to examine the extent to which the concept of ETIIs explains any sexual motivation of male furries.

### Extent and Development of Interest in Being Furries

Participants reported whether they had more than one fursona, had one fursona, did not have a fursona but were considering one, or did not have a fursona and were not considering one. Those who reported that they had at least one fursona provided descriptions of their fursona or fursonas. Participants also rated their frequencies of fursuiting (0 = Never to 6 = Daily) during the past year and the year that they fursuited most. In addition, they reported whether they had ever considered the possibility that they were another species or kind of animal (yes or no) and whether they had ever considered surgery to make themselves look more like another species or kind of animal (yes or no). Finally, participants reported the age at which they first became furries and described the manner in which it happened with open-ended responses to the question: “How did you become a furry?” Given the exploratory nature of the present study, all open-ended responses were simply reviewed by the first author for common themes, which were then used to calculate the numbers and percentages of participants who provided responses that mentioned those themes.

### Sexual Orientation

Participants reported their sexual identity, choosing among heterosexual/straight, bisexual, homosexual/gay, asexual, and other. If they reported their sexual identity as “other,” participants provided open-ended responses that explained their choice. Participants also rated their current sexual feelings on the Kinsey scale (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948), which is a 7-point scale (0 = sexual feelings toward females only to 6 = sexual feelings toward males only).

Participants reported their current relationship status, choosing among the following options: single, in an open relationship, in a closed relationship, engaged, married, divorced, and widowed. If they reported being in an open relationship, in a closed relationship, engaged, or married, participants provided the gender of their current romantic partner. Although some of these options were not mutually exclusive (e.g., one could be both in an open relationship and married), participants could choose only one option. Because options were ordered in general to indicate progressively more serious relationships, participants were assumed to have understood that some options superseded others (e.g., being married superseded being in an open relationship). Participants also reported whether their romantic partner identified as a furry, selecting from the following options: “Yes, this person played a role in me becoming a furry,” “Yes, I played a role in this person becoming a furry,” “Yes, we met over our mutual interest in being furies or as part of the furry community,” “Yes, but we did not meet over our mutual interest in being furies or as part of the furry community,” “No,” and “Not sure.”

### **Sexual Interests Related to Being a Furry**

Participants rated the degree to which their interest in being furies was sexual on a 5-point scale (1 = Not at all to 5 = Extremely). They also rated the degree to which their interests in interacting with other furies online and in person, looking at furry artwork and other media, and fursuiting were sexual on analogous 5-point scales. In addition, participants provided open-ended responses explaining why they were furies, if the primary reason was not sexual. Finally, participants rated the importance of fantasizing about being or dressing as anthropomorphic animals during masturbation on a 5-point scale (1 = Not at all important to 5 = Extremely important).

### **Sexual Interests Related to Erotic Target Identity Inversions**

The concept of ETIIs provides a compelling explanation for why male furies might be sexually motivated. If characterized by an ETII, male furies should be both sexually attracted to anthropomorphic animals and sexually aroused by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal, just as autogynephilic men tend to be sexually attracted to women and are sexually aroused by the fantasy of being a woman (e.g., Blanchard, 1992; Hsu et al., 2015). To assess sexual interests related to ETIIs that might be found in male furies, participants rated the degree to which they were sexually attracted to the following kinds of erotic targets: female anthropomorphic animals, male anthropomorphic animals, real animals, and women. Ratings were made on an 11-point scale (0 = not at all sexually attracted to 10 = most sexually

attracted). Participants also rated the degree to which they were sexually aroused by the fantasy of being each of these kinds of erotic targets on an analogous 11-point scale (0 = not at all sexually aroused to 10 = most sexually aroused).

Male furies presented an additional opportunity to test specificity in the sexual interests related to an ETII involving sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal. Specifically, many furies strongly identify with and create fursonas and fursuits representing anthropomorphic animals of one or two species in particular. Gerbasi et al. (2008) mention that canine, feline, and dragon species are common, whereas non-human primate species are not. Thus, participants who endorsed any degree of sexual attraction to either female or male anthropomorphic animals also rated their degree of sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals of the following species: foxes, wolves, dogs, lions, tigers, cats, rabbits, mice, raccoons, horses, bears, eagles, and dragons. Ratings were made on the same previously described 11-point scale (0 = not at all sexually attracted to 10 = most sexually attracted). Participants who endorsed any degree of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being either a female or a male anthropomorphic animal also rated their degree of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal of each previously listed species on an analogous 11-point scale (0 = not at all sexually aroused to 10 = most sexually aroused). The list of species was not exhaustive and was based upon Gerbasi et al.’s comments and our own observations on the Internet of commonly represented species among furies who have fursonas or fursuits.

Participants might make a connection to their previous ratings of sexual attraction to different kinds of erotic targets and become biased toward similarly rating their sexual arousal by the fantasy of being each of those same targets. In order to reduce bias due to carryover effects, we asked participants to rate their sexual attraction to the various erotic targets at the start of the questionnaire and to rate their sexual arousal by the fantasy of being each of those targets at the end.

Finally, participants who endorsed any degree of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being either a female or a male anthropomorphic animal provided detailed answers to open-ended questions about their fantasies and experiences. Those participants described, for example, what they think about specifically when fantasizing about being an anthropomorphic animal, including their fursona if they have one, and their most sexually arousing fantasy related to being an anthropomorphic animal or their fursona.

### **General Variables for Sexual Attraction to Anthropomorphic Animals and Sexual Arousal by the Fantasy of Being an Anthropomorphic Animal**

Male furies may be sexually attracted to anthropomorphic animals of different genders and species, and they may also

be sexually aroused by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal of different genders and species. Indeed, as previously mentioned, the fursonas and fursuits of most furries tend to represent anthropomorphic animals of just one or two species. In order to facilitate a broad assessment of participants' sexual interests related to anthropomorphic animals, we constructed general variables for sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal that were not specific to any gender or species: The general variable for sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals was the higher of the two single-item ratings of sexual attraction to female and male anthropomorphic animals. For instance, participants who rated sexual attraction to male anthropomorphic animals as 9 but no sexual attraction to female anthropomorphic animals scored 9 on this new variable.

The general variable for sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal was the higher of the two single-item ratings of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a female and a male anthropomorphic animal. For instance, participants who rated sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a male anthropomorphic animal as 7 and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a female anthropomorphic animal as 5 scored 7 on this new variable. In the following analyses, we used these general variables as continuous measures of sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal that were not specific to any gender or species.

## Results

### Extent and Development of Interest in Being Furries

Although our survey focused primarily on the sexuality of male furries, we included several questions that assessed the extent and the development of their interest in being furries. All participants identified as male and as furries, because they would not have otherwise qualified for this study. Besides engaging with the furry community online, such as in Internet forums from which our participants were recruited, and sometimes in person, what did it mean to be a furry?

With respect to fursonas among participants, 49 (14.7%) reported having more than one, 164 (49.1%) reported having one, 66 (19.8%) reported that they did not currently have a fursona but were considering one, and 55 (16.5%) reported that they neither had a fursona nor were considering one. Because there was a high prevalence of participants who had at least one fursona (63.8%), we have included descriptions of fursonas provided by every twentieth such participant in Table 1, for a total of 11 descriptions.

With respect to fursuiting among participants, the average frequency during the past year was 0.49 ( $SD = 1.26$ ) using

our rating scale (0 = never to 6 = daily), which was close to never. The average frequency during the year that they fursuited most was 0.51 ( $SD = 1.33$ ) using the same rating scale, which was also close to never. Thus, fursuiting tended to be a rare activity. Indeed, only 66 (19.8%) participants had ever fursuited (i.e., reported a frequency other than “never” on either of the relevant measures). Evidently, for our participants, fursonas were more common to the experience of being furries than fursuiting was.

Similarly, only 40 (12.0%) participants said that they had ever considered the possibility that they were another species or kind of animal. Furthermore, only 52 (15.6%) participants reported that they had ever considered surgery to make themselves look more like another species or kind of animal.

The average age at which participants reported that they became furries was 14.97 years ( $SD = 3.21$ ). The majority of participants (216; 64.7%) were in the ages of 11–15 years when they became furries. An additional 89 (26.7%) were in the ages of 16–20 years. Only 19 (5.7%) participants reported that they first became furries over the age of 20 years. The most common manner in which they became furries was in some context of seeking or discovering online pornography featuring anthropomorphic animals (e.g., “I literally searched for ‘naked animal people porn,’” “Found furry porn”), mentioned by 127 (41.2%) of 308 participants who provided a response to this open-ended item. The next most common manner in which they became furries, mentioned by 93 (30.2%) participants, involved discovering or otherwise hearing about furries or the furry community through art, stories, or posts online (e.g., “Stumbled across some furry art”). Many participants did not clearly describe whether the art, stories, or posts that led them to become furries were erotic. Another 35 (11.4%) participants said that they became furries because their friends introduced them to the idea or to the community (e.g., “A friend introduced me”). The remaining participants who provided responses were too vague in their answers (e.g., “Internet”).

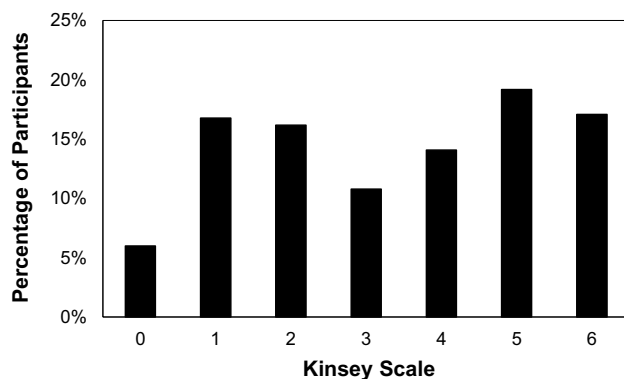
### Sexual Orientation

Of the male furries in our sample, 143 (42.8%) identified themselves as bisexual, 106 (31.7%) as homosexual/gay, 53 (15.9%) as heterosexual/straight, and 9 (2.7%) as asexual. The remaining 23 (6.9%) participants chose the response “other,” and the most common explanation was that they identified as pansexual. The next most common explanation was that their sexual identity varied depending on context (e.g., online vs. in person, humans vs. anthropomorphic animals). Figure 1 shows the distribution of participants' ratings on the Kinsey scale, and this distribution is consistent with the distribution of sexual identities. The average rating on the Kinsey scale



**Table 1** Descriptions of fursonas from every twentieth participant who had at least one fursona

Record	Description of fursona
1	A fennec fox, way more social than me, and somewhat more athletic
21	An anthro dragon that's 6'8" and fairly taciturn. While preferring his own company, he's not adverse to socializing, even if he does most of the listening. He's fairly well built with broad shoulders, but not extremely muscular. He doesn't go out of his way for sexual contact, as he likes to keep to himself most of the time
41	Athletic build, fox markings, although has much more rigid musculature, height tends to fluctuate for some odd reason. Mostly interested in males but can be charmed by a female with an interesting enough personality. He's kind, a bit of a ditz and means well in all he does, and he always embraces life and all he does with 100% of himself
61	Exactly like myself
81	He is largely based on how I see myself. He is shy, quiet, and independent. He is based on <i>Sceloporus arenicolus</i> , or the dune sagebrush lizard. The exception is that the colors are exaggerated, and blue feathers are added. That species was chosen for its behavioral traits
101	I'm an anthro wolf with dark black furr and ram horns. I have bright red, pupil-less eyes, and a masculine, toned figure. Despite my intimidating appearance, I'm a pleasant enough furr, though I prefer to be quiet when possible. I enjoy dominating my sexual partners, but I don't mind being dominated by the right furrs. I generally prefer feminine partners, but occasionally take on very masculine and larger roleplay partners
121	It's basically a generic self-insert of me. I didn't really make a character so much as an animal thing to use as an identity when talking to other furs. So he's a magpie, with slightly larger pecs due to having wings on his arms, and it only making sense for a birdman of some sort to have that sort of philology. Few streaks of blue highlights to break up the black, as is a common marking with the species. Genitalia depend on the preference of the artist or the person I'm getting a picture with. Either some sort of cloaca amalgamation with a thin tapered dick popping out or just regular human bits the rest of the time. Gay as fuck with a fondness for exhibitionism, feet, bondage, and group sex
141	Muscular, but pudgy. Physically strong, loyal, and empathetic. Interested in a variety of sexual kinks ranging from mainstream to hardcore. Polyamorous, with voracious sexual appetite
161	My fursona's physical characteristics are traditional northern sergal. Haven't developed much more detail than that yet
181	Small body, anthropomorphic to the extent that he walks on two legs and talks, but his body is mostly in proportion to that of a real raccoon. He wears clothes and does most things a normal person would do. He is heavily stylized when I draw him, and he has human-like genitals (i.e. penis)
201	White tiger. Mostly serious, no-nonsense personality most of the time but can also be immature and jubilant at times. Also has a love for food. Would be considered very overweight or obese but still maintains a strong body, giving him a "muscle-fat" look. Sexually prefers guys (especially other chubby guys) but can also be attracted to the female form (only chubby women though)

**Fig. 1** Distribution of participants' ratings on the Kinsey scale (0 = sexual feelings toward females only to 6 = sexual feelings toward males only;  $N = 334$ )

was 3.36 ( $SD = 1.92$ ), indicating that participants' current sexual feelings tended to be equally divided toward females and males.

## Romantic Relationships

The majority of participants (232; 69.9%) reported that they were single (i.e., not in a romantic relationship with anyone). In addition, 70 (21.1%) reported being in a closed relationship, 20 (6.0%) in an open relationship, 6 (1.8%) married, 2 (0.6%) engaged, 1 (0.3%) divorced, and 1 (0.3%) widowed. Two participants did not report their relationship status. Of the 98 participants currently involved with a romantic partner, 75 (77.3%) were with a man, 18 (18.6%) with a woman, 2 (2.1%) with both a man and a woman, 1 (1.0%) with a female-to-male transgender individual, and 1 (1.0%) with a horse. One participant did not report the gender of his romantic partner. Participants in a relationship with a woman scored much lower ( $M = 1.39$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ) than those in a relationship with a man did ( $M = 4.49$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ) on the Kinsey scale,  $t(91) = -8.48$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Thus, participants in a relationship with a woman tended to report current sexual feelings toward females mostly, whereas participants in a relationship with a man tended to report them toward males mostly.

Of those with a romantic partner, 62 (63.3%) reported that their partner also identified as a furry and that they met over their mutual interest in being furies or as part of the furry

community. Another 13 (13.3%) participants reported that their partner did not identify as a furry, 9 (9.2%) reported that their partner also identified as a furry but that they did not meet as a result, 6 (6.1%) reported that they were not sure whether their partner identified as a furry, 4 (4.1%) reported that their partner played a role in them becoming furies, and 4 (4.1%) reported that they played a role in their partner becoming a furry.

### Sexual Attraction to Anthropomorphic Animals by Gender

The average degree of sexual attraction to female anthropomorphic animals was 5.61 ( $SD = 3.76$ ), and that to male anthropomorphic animals was 7.20 ( $SD = 3.16$ ). The majority of participants (245; 73.4%) reported sexual attraction to both female and male anthropomorphic animals (i.e., rated their sexual attraction to both as greater than 0). In addition, 67 (20.1%) reported sexual attraction only to male anthropomorphic animals, 19 (5.7%) only to female anthropomorphic animals, and 3 (0.9%) to neither gender of anthropomorphic animals. Excluding the 23 who chose “other” as their sexual identity, participants tended to report sexual identities that corresponded with their sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals with respect to gender,  $\chi^2(9, N = 311) = 200.28, p < .0001$ . Furthermore, participants reporting exclusive attraction to female anthropomorphic animals scored lower ( $M = 0.47, SD = 0.61$ ; thus, more heterosexual) compared with those reporting attraction to both female and male anthropomorphic animals ( $M = 2.96, SD = 1.60$ ) on the Kinsey scale, who in turn scored lower than those reporting exclusive attraction to male anthropomorphic animals ( $M = 5.61, SD = 0.78$ ),  $F(2, 328) = 131.89, p < .0001$ , all  $ps < .0001$  for post hoc comparisons. Thus, participants tended to report current sexual feelings toward females versus males that corresponded with their sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals with respect to gender.

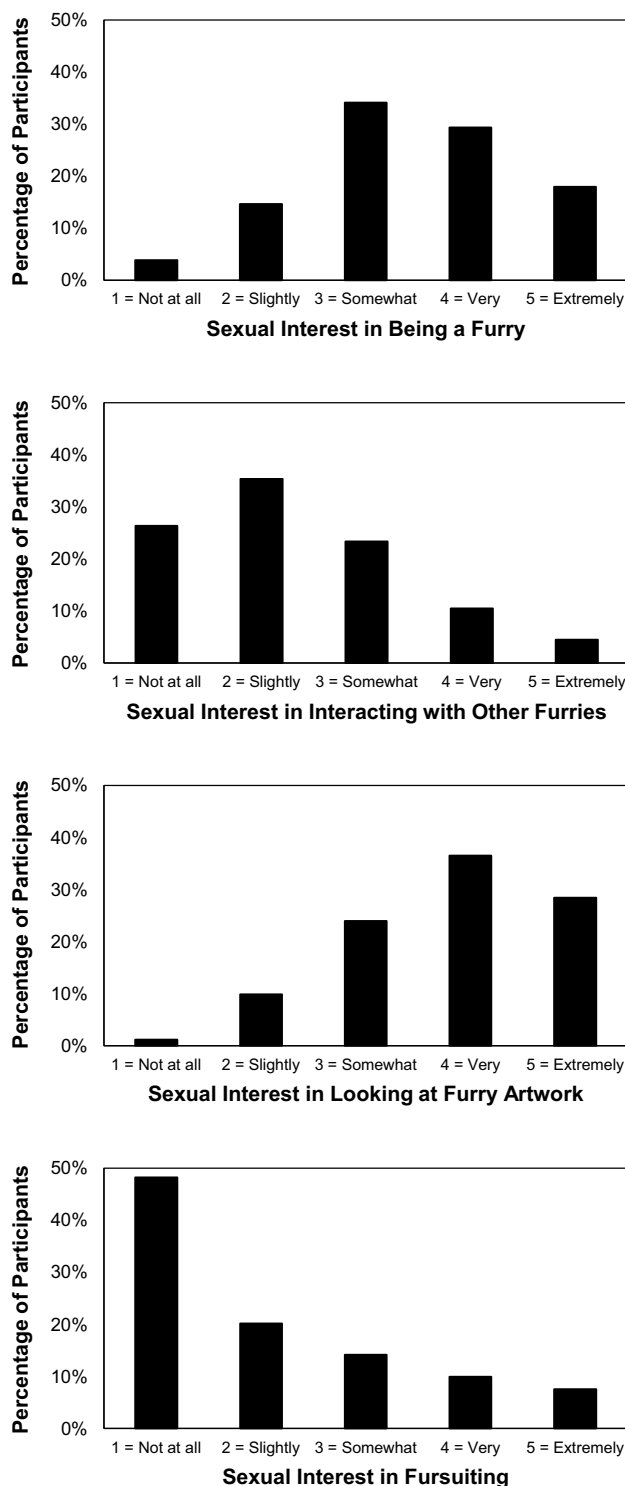
No participants who identified as heterosexual/straight or homosexual/gay were exclusively attracted to male anthropomorphic animals or female anthropomorphic animals, respectively. Most participants (69.8%) who identified as heterosexual/straight and 38.7% of participants who identified as homosexual/gay, however, reported sexual attraction to both female and male anthropomorphic animals. For these participants, the mismatch between sexual identity and sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals by gender might reflect differences in their appraisal of erotic targets depending on whether they are human or anthropomorphic animals. That is, some participants identifying as heterosexual/straight may have felt that this identity applied to their sexual attraction to humans and not anthropomorphic animals, which they found sexually attractive regardless of gender. Indeed, some participants identified their sexual identity as “other” for this reason.

An alternative explanation for participants having a mismatch between sexual identity and sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals by gender may be that they were most attracted to female or male anthropomorphic animals, but experienced incidental attraction to anthropomorphic animals of the other gender. As a result, they may have been inclined to identify as heterosexual/straight or homosexual/gay because their sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals of their less preferred gender was not strong enough to merit identifying as bisexual. In support of this explanation, participants identifying as heterosexual/straight with sexual attraction to male anthropomorphic animals only rated such attraction as 4.65 ( $SD = 2.96$ ) on average, compared with 8.89 ( $SD = 1.43$ ) for sexual attraction to female anthropomorphic animals,  $t(36) = -8.65, p < .0001$ . Similarly, participants identifying as homosexual/gay with sexual attraction to female anthropomorphic animals only rated such attraction as 4.00 ( $SD = 2.59$ ) on average, compared with 8.93 ( $SD = 1.68$ ) for sexual attraction to male anthropomorphic animals,  $t(40) = -13.02, p < .0001$ .

### Sexual Interests Related to Being a Furry

Figure 2 shows the distributions of our sample’s ratings of the degree to which several interests related to being a furry—being a furry, interacting with other furies online and in person, looking at furry artwork and other media, and fursuiting—were sexual. The large majority of participants provided responses consistent with at least some degree of sexual motivation. Specifically, 321 (96.1%) reported that their interest in being furies was sexual to some degree ( $M = 3.43, SD = 1.07$ ), 246 (73.7%) reported that their interest in interacting with other furies online and in person was sexual to some degree ( $M = 2.31, SD = 1.11$ ), 330 (98.8%) reported that their interest in looking at furry artwork and other media was sexual to some degree ( $M = 3.81, SD = 1.00$ ), and 172 (51.5%) reported that their interest in fursuiting was sexual to some degree ( $M = 2.08, SD = 1.30$ ). We note that the degree of sexual interest varied considerably across the four items. However, interests in being a furry and in looking at furry artwork were rated approximately one standard deviation more sexual on average, compared with interests in interacting with other furies and in fursuiting.

Table 2 presents the correlations among participants’ sexual interests related to being a furry. All of the correlations were significant and at least moderately positive. The internal consistency of the four ratings was 0.77, using the alpha reliability coefficient. Thus, we created a composite variable from the average of the four ratings, which reflected the general sexual interest in being a furry. Figure 3 shows the distribution of scores on this new composite variable. The



**Fig. 2** Distributions of participants' ratings of the degree to which their interests in being furies, interacting with other furies online and in person, looking at furry artwork and other media, and fursuiting were sexual ( $N=334$ )

average score was 2.91 ( $SD=0.86$ ) on a 5-point scale, indicating that participants rated their general interest in being furies as somewhat sexual on average.

Of the 211 participants who indicated that their primary motivation for being furies was not sexual and who provided open-ended responses explaining their reasons, 34 (16.1%) confirmed that it was in fact primarily sexual (e.g., "It is primarily sexual," "It pretty much just is sexually motivated"). The following additional responses that provided alternative motivations to sexuality were not mutually exclusive: belonging to a community of individuals with shared interests (73; 34.6%; "A strong sense of community"), finding anthropomorphic animals to be cute, interesting, or otherwise aesthetically pleasing (60; 28.4%; "Cartoon animals are just cute"), and liking the idea of being an anthropomorphic animal because it is fun or freeing (54; 25.6%; "There's an almost primal thrill when indulging in these fantasies"). Other participants provided responses that did not fit unambiguously into any of these categories. Participants who said they were furies because they belonged to a community of individuals with shared interests often emphasized how much furies are open-minded, talented, and creative. Importantly, 157 (47.0%) of the total sample of 334 male furies said they were furies primarily for sexual reasons, including the 34 who confirmed this in their open-ended responses about why their primary motivation was not sexual.

Although participants overwhelmingly acknowledged at least some sexual motivation for being furies, the question remains how important being a furry is to their sexuality. One potential window into this issue is masturbatory fantasy, which tends to be chosen to maximize sexual pleasure. When participants were asked the importance of fantasizing about being or dressing as anthropomorphic animals during masturbation, the average degree of its importance was 2.29 ( $SD = 1.41$ ) using our rating scale (1 = Not at all important to 5 = Extremely important), suggesting it tended to be slightly important. Specifically, 155 (46.8%) said that it was not at all important, 93 (28.1%) said that it was slightly or somewhat important, and 83 (25.1%) said that it was very or extremely important. Thus, male furies in our sample varied considerably in the reported importance of fantasizing about being or dressing as anthropomorphic animals during masturbation.

### Fursuiting and Sexual Interests Related to Being a Furry

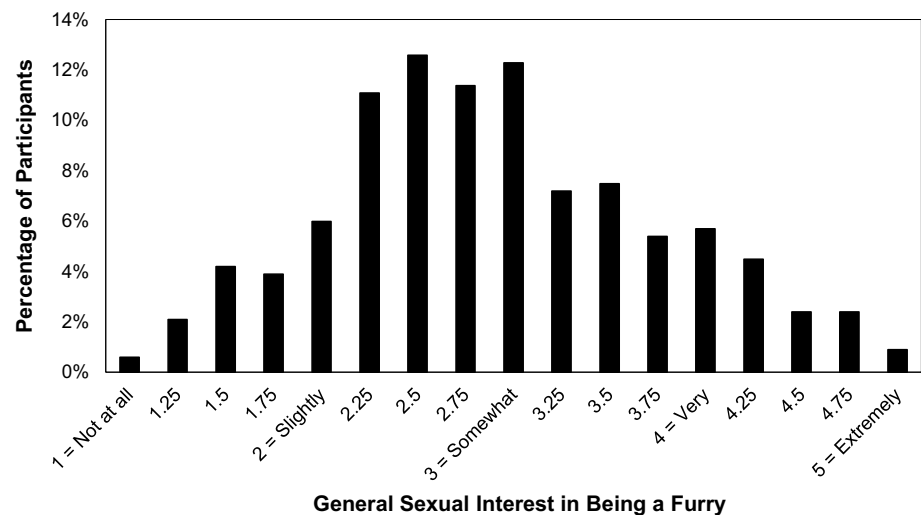
Fursuiting tended to be rare among our sample of male furies, which raised the question of whether our findings regarding their sexual motivation apply to samples of male furies among which fursuiting is more common. We were especially concerned that the large prevalence, if not extent of, sexual motivation was relevant only to those without a history of fursuiting, which comprised most of our sample. Thus, we examined whether participants with a history of fursuiting ( $n=66$ ) differed from those without a history ( $n=268$ ) in the degree of their sexual interests related to being a furry and

**Table 2** Correlations among participants' sexual interests related to being a furry

Sexual interest	Interacting with other furries online and in person	Looking at furry artwork and other media	Fursuiting
Being a furry	.45	.64	.45
Interacting with other furries online and in person	–	.42	.43
Looking at furry artwork and other media	–	–	.39

All correlations were statistically significant at  $p < .0001$

$N = 334$

**Fig. 3** Distribution of participants' scores on the composite variable of general sexual interest in being a furry ( $N = 334$ )

in the importance of fantasizing about being or dressing as anthropomorphic animals during masturbation.

Participants with a history of fursuiting rated their interests in being furries ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ) and in looking at furry artwork ( $M = 3.74$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ) as no more sexual than did participants without such a history ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 1.01$  and  $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ , respectively), both  $ps > .49$ . They differed, however, in their ratings of the degree to which interacting with other furries ( $M = 2.59$ ,  $SD = 1.15$  vs.  $M = 2.25$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ),  $p = .023$ , and especially fursuiting ( $M = 2.65$ ,  $SD = 1.49$  vs.  $M = 1.95$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ),  $p < .0001$ , were sexual, with participants who had fursuited scoring higher. In addition, participants with ( $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ) and without a history of fursuiting ( $M = 2.87$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ) did not differ in their degree of general sexual interest in being furries (using the composite variable),  $t(86.3) = 1.57$ ,  $p = .120$ . Those who had fursuited ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ) were more likely than those who had not ( $M = 2.19$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ) to report that fantasizing about being or dressing as anthropomorphic animals was important during masturbation,  $t(332) = 2.44$ ,  $p = .015$ . Together, these results suggest that our sample did not likely overrepresent the prevalence and extent of sexual motivation because the majority of participants had never fursuited. Indeed, those who had fursuited reported greater sexual interest in some aspects of being furries and greater importance

of being furries to their sexuality, rather than those who had not. Perhaps furries who are especially sexually motivated are more likely to spend the money to obtain fursuits, which are expensive.

### Correlates of Sexual Interests Related to Being a Furry

We examined the extent to which sexual motivation among our male furries was related to having a fursona, fursuiting, having ever considered the possibility of being another species or kind of animal, and having ever considered surgery to look more like another species or kind of animal. The general sexual interest in being a furry (using the composite variable) was not significantly associated with having a fursona, with the latter categorical variable treated as a continuous measure (1 = no fursona and not considering one, 2 = no fursona but considering one, 3 = one fursona, and 4 = more than one fursona),  $r(332) = .00$ ,  $p = .963$ . However, a higher general sexual interest in being a furry was significantly associated with a higher frequency of fursuiting during the past year,  $r(332) = .15$ ,  $p = .007$ . Because sexual interest in fursuiting is most conceptually related to the frequency of fursuiting during the past year, we also examined the correlation between this sexual interest in particular (as opposed to the composite variable) and this frequency of fursuiting. Participants with

more sexual interest in fursuiting tended to fursuit more often during the past year,  $r(332) = .23, p < .0001$ . Finally, general sexual interest in being a furry was not significantly correlated with participants' having ever considered the possibility that they were another species or kind of animal, odds ratio (OR) = 1.08,  $p = .685$ , or having ever considered surgery to make themselves look more like another species or kind of animal, OR = 1.36,  $p = .079$ .

### Sexual Interests Related to Erotic Target Identity Inversions

The concept of ETIIs might explain male furies' sexual motivation. Because ETIIs involve locating external erotic targets within a man's own body, men with ETIIs are sexually aroused by imagining themselves as the same kinds of individuals to whom they are sexually attracted (Blanchard, 1991; Freund & Blanchard, 1993; Lawrence, 2009). That is, their external and internal erotic targets are similar. Thus, if male furies have ETIIs, we expect them to be both sexually attracted to anthropomorphic animals and sexually aroused by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal. Plausibly, male furies may also be both sexually attracted to real animals and sexually aroused by the fantasy of being a real animal, because anthropomorphic and real animals are physically similar. Indeed, anthropomorphic animals have been created to mimic real animals. Because ETIIs may be considered paraphilias (Freund & Blanchard, 1993), which tend to co-occur within the same individual (Bailey & Hsu, 2017; Blanchard & Hucker, 1991), and because autogynephilia is likely the most common ETII (Blanchard, 1993), we examined whether some male furies sexually attracted to women are also sexually aroused by the fantasy of being a woman.

### Prevalence and Degree of Sexual Interests Related to ETIIs

Figure 4 shows the distributions of participants' scores on the general variables for sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal, their ratings of sexual attraction to real animals and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a real animal, and their ratings of sexual attraction to women and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a woman. Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for these three sets of sexual attraction and sexual arousal ratings, relevant to conceptualizing three putative ETIIs: autoanthropomorphozoophilia, autozoophilia, and autogynephilia. As shown, both sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal were almost universal among participants, although some said that their sexual attraction or arousal was less than strong. Participants from the four most common recruitment sources did not differ in either the prevalence or the degree of sexual arousal by the

fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal, both  $ps > .138$ . These results suggest that male furies in our sample tend to be both sexually attracted to anthropomorphic animals and sexually aroused by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal, consistent with the concept of ETIIs.

The general variables of sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal were significantly, if modestly, correlated,  $r(332) = .21, p < .0001$ . This finding suggests that participants' variability in sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal, a possible sexual motivation for being a furry, was predicted by their variability in sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals, although not strongly so.

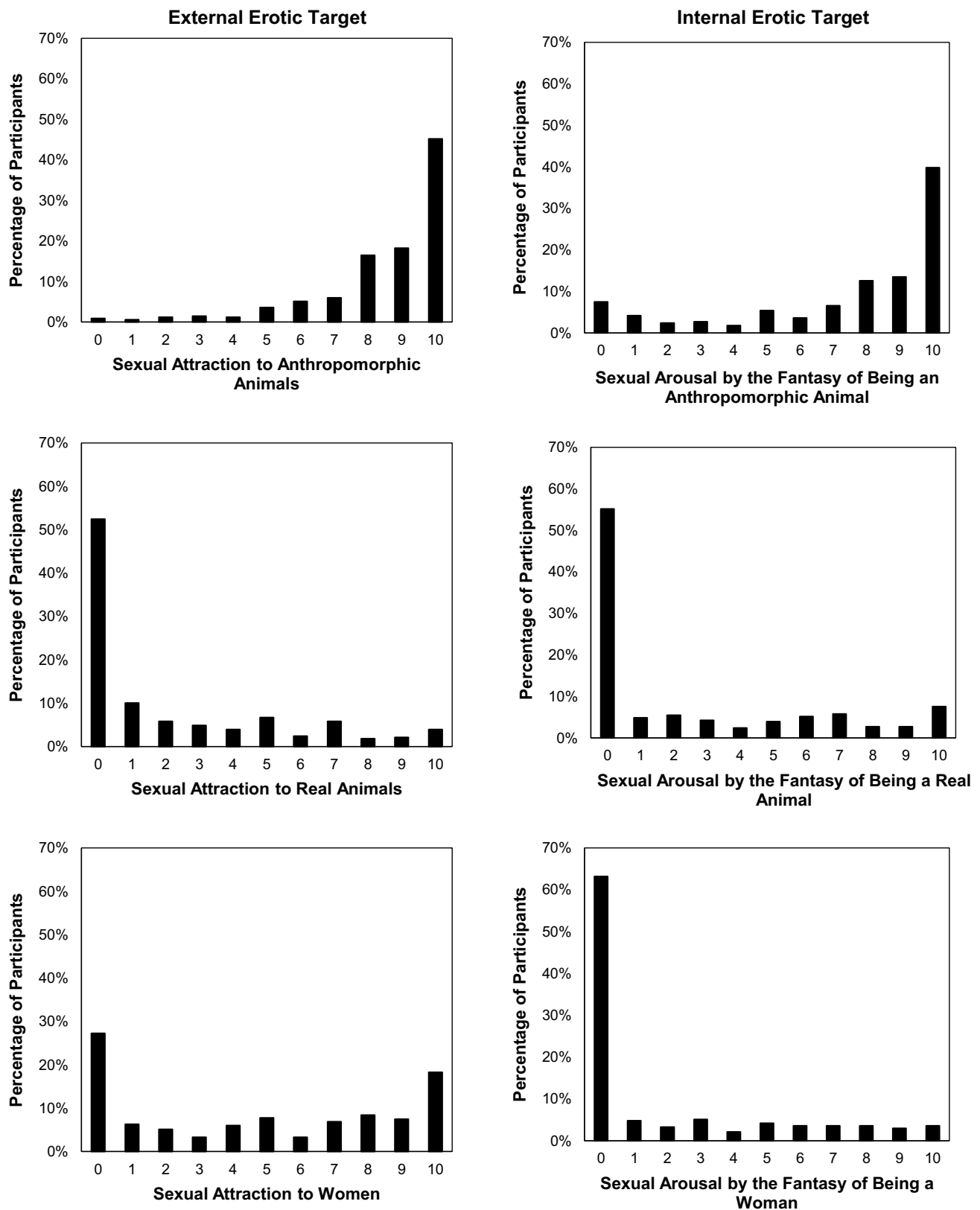
The rates of nonzero sexual attraction to real animals and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a real animal indicate that these sexual interests were common among participants. However, the average degree of either sexual interest was low. Unlike the highly negatively skewed distributions of sexual interests related to anthropomorphic animals, the distributions of sexual interests related to real animals were highly positively skewed, with at least half of participants scoring the minimum on either rating. This suggests that male furies are not primarily motivated by either zoophilia or autozoophilia. Because zoophilia was significantly correlated with autozoophilia,  $r(332) = .48, p < .0001$ , participants sexually aroused by the fantasy of being a real animal tended to be sexually attracted to real animals. This result provides some support for conceptualizing autozoophilia as an ETII.

The average degree of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a woman was low, although participants not uncommonly endorsed greater than zero arousal. Thus, the relevant distribution for autogynephilia was highly positively skewed. Indeed, over half of participants rated their sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a woman at the minimum. Unsurprisingly, sexual attraction to women was significantly correlated with autogynephilia,  $r(332) = .44, p < .0001$ , consistent with autogynephilia as an ETII.

### Specificity of Anthropomorphic Animals in Sexual Interests Related to ETIIs

Online with their fursonas or in person with their fursuits, furies change their appearance and behavior to become more like anthropomorphic animals specifically and not real animals. Certainly, they do not change their appearance and behavior to become more like women. Thus, if male furies are men with ETIIs, we expect them to report a higher prevalence and degree of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal than of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being either a real animal or a woman, despite the fact that autogynephilia is likely more common in the general population (Blanchard, 1993). Furthermore, real animals are more





**Fig. 4** Distributions of participants' sexual interests related to ETIs ( $N=334$ )

**Table 3** Descriptive statistics for participants' sexual interests related to ETII

Sexual interest	<i>n</i> <sup>a</sup>	% <sup>b</sup>	<i>M</i> <sup>c</sup>	<i>SD</i> <sup>c</sup>
Autoanthropomorphozoophilia as an ETII				
Sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals	331	99.10	8.51	2.05
Sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal	309	92.51	7.39	3.28
Autozoophilia as an ETII				
Sexual attraction to real animals	156	46.71	2.14	3.02
Sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a real animal	148	44.31	2.51	3.46
Autogynephilia as an ETII				
Sexual attraction to women	243	72.75	4.74	3.91
Sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a woman	123	36.83	1.94	3.11

<sup>a</sup>Values in this column represent the numbers of participants who scored above 0 on each sexual interest

<sup>b</sup>Values in this column represent the percentages of participants who scored above 0 on each sexual interest

<sup>c</sup>Values in these columns were computed using all participants

*N* = 334

similar physically to anthropomorphic animals than women are. As a result, we might also expect a higher prevalence and degree of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a real animal than of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a woman, again despite the fact that autogynephilia is likely more common in the general population.

The average degree of sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals using the general variable was significantly much higher than that of sexual attraction to real animals, paired  $t(333) = 36.17, p < .0001, d = 2.06$ . The average degree of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal using the general variable was also significantly much higher than that of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a real animal, paired  $t(333) = 22.33, p < .0001, d = 1.23$ . Consistent with the idea that male furries internalize their sexual attraction specifically to anthropomorphic animals rather than real animals, participants reported more sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal than by the fantasy of being a real animal. Although modest, there was a significant correlation between sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a real animal,  $r(332) = .30, p < .0001$ .

The average degree of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal using the general variable was significantly much higher than that of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a woman, paired  $t(333) = 24.65, p < .0001, d = 1.35$ . The average degree of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a real animal was also significantly higher than that of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a woman, paired  $t(333) = 2.37, p = .018, d = 0.13$ . Thus, in accordance with the idea that they are characterized by an ETII that specifically reflects their behaviors to become more like anthropomorphic animals, male furries in our sample reported more sexual arousal by the fantasy of being

an anthropomorphic animal than by the fantasy of being a woman. Interestingly, sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal was slightly but significantly correlated with autogynephilia,  $r(332) = .20, p < .0005$ .

#### Specificity of Gender in Sexual Interests Related to Autoanthropomorphozoophilia as an ETII

Because male furries vary in their sexual preferences for anthropomorphic animals with respect to gender and species, we examined whether the specificity of such preferences in our sample predicted the specificity of their sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal, consistent with autoanthropomorphozoophilia as an ETII. In other words, if male furries are characterized by an ETII, namely autoanthropomorphozoophilia, then they might be especially sexually aroused by the fantasy of being the same kinds of anthropomorphic animals to whom they are sexually attracted. For example, do participants sexually attracted to female anthropomorphic animals have a greater tendency than those sexually attracted to male anthropomorphic animals have to be sexually aroused by fantasizing that they are female anthropomorphic animals? Do participants sexually attracted to anthropomorphic wolves have a greater tendency than those sexually attracted to other species of anthropomorphic animals have to be sexually aroused by fantasizing that they are anthropomorphic wolves? We examined first the correspondence of sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal with respect to gender.

Table 4 presents the joint frequencies of participants sexually attracted to female, male, or both female and male anthropomorphic animals, who were sexually aroused by the fantasy of being a female, a male, or both a female and a male anthropomorphic animal. Joint frequencies were based on the

**Table 4** Joint frequencies of participants sexually attracted to female, male, or both female and male anthropomorphic animals (external erotic target), who were sexually aroused by the fantasy of being a female, a male, or both a female and a male anthropomorphic animal (internal erotic target)

Internal erotic target as anthropomorphic animal	External erotic target of anthropomorphic animal					
	Female ( <i>N</i> = 15)		Male ( <i>N</i> = 63)		Both female and male ( <i>N</i> = 229)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Female	<b>4</b>	<b>26.67</b>	0	0.00	3	1.31
Male	2	13.33	<b>60</b>	<b>95.24</b>	69	30.13
Both female and male	9	60.00	3	4.76	<b>157</b>	<b>68.56</b>

Boldface indicates numbers and percentages for which sexual attraction to female, male, or both female and male anthropomorphic animals corresponded with sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a female, a male, or both a female and a male anthropomorphic animal

numbers and percentages of participants for whom relevant ratings of sexual attraction and sexual arousal were greater than 0. For instance, participants sexually attracted to female anthropomorphic animals who were sexually aroused by the fantasy of being a male anthropomorphic animal must have rated only their attraction to female anthropomorphic animals and their arousal by the fantasy of being a male anthropomorphic animal as greater than 0. Consistent with the concept of ETIIs, the gender of external erotic targets tended to match the gender of internal erotic targets,  $\chi^2(4, N = 307) = 130.37$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Indeed, more participants exclusively attracted to female anthropomorphic animals were sexually aroused by the fantasy of being a female rather than a male anthropomorphic animal, and all participants exclusively attracted to male anthropomorphic animals were sexually aroused by the fantasy of being a male rather than a female anthropomorphic animal,  $\chi^2(1, N = 66) = 42.58$ ,  $p < .0001$ .

### Specificity of Species in Sexual Interests Related to Autoanthropomorphozoophilia as an ETII

We examined next whether sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals of different species tended to correspond with sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal of those same species. To that end, we correlated ratings of sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals of the 13 different species with ratings of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal of those same 13 species.

Table 5 presents these correlations among participants sexually aroused by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal. Consistent with the idea that autoanthropomorphozoophilia is an ETII, sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals of each species was significantly and positively correlated with sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal of that same species (see the diagonal of Table 5). In addition, sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals of each species was

significantly and positively correlated, if less strongly, with sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal of at least one nearby species. Indeed, there were clusters of two or three species in which sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals of one species within the cluster was most strongly correlated with the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal of that same species, next most strongly correlated with the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal of the other one or two species within the cluster, and much less strongly correlated with the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal of species not in the cluster. Clusters of species that emerged from inspecting Table 5 include canines (foxes, wolves, and dogs), felines (lions, tigers, and cats), small woodland animals (rabbits, mice, and raccoons), large woodland animals (horses and bears), and flying animals (eagles and dragons). For example, sexual attraction to anthropomorphic wolves was most strongly correlated with sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic wolf, but the next highest correlations were with sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic dog and fox. This pattern of correspondence comprised the cluster of canines.

In general, the clusters show some resemblance to the “stimulus generalization gradient” that was proposed by Blanchard et al. (2012), in which men are second most attracted to individuals of the same gender as those to whom they are most attracted, but who are of the next level of sexual maturity. The clusters are also reminiscent of a pattern we found in a sample of autopedophilic men in a previous study: Sexual attraction to children or adults of a particular gender/age category was most strongly correlated with sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a child or adult of that same gender/age category, but the next highest correlations were with sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a child or adult of adjacent gender/age categories (Hsu & Bailey, 2017). Finally, the clusters are consistent with the idea that the external erotic targets are similar to the internal erotic targets among men with ETIIs. Wolves

**Table 5** Correlations between participants' (only those sexually aroused by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal) ratings of sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals of different species and ratings of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal of those same species

Internal erotic target as anthropomorphic animal	External erotic target of anthropomorphic animal													
	Foxes	Wolves	Dogs	Lions	Tigers	Cats	Rabbits	Mice	Raccoons	Horses	Bears	Eagles	Dragons	
Fox	.67***	.45***	.40***	.05	.11	.15*	.13*	.05	.29***	.04	.02	−.12*	−.05	
Wolf	.45***	.62***	.41***	.14*	.22**	.08	.01	−.09	.16*	.06	.11	−.02	.01	
Dog	.38***	.47***	.60***	.08	.15*	.06	.01	−.03	.15*	.10	.14*	−.09	−.05	
Lion	.08	.16*	.02	.62***	.52***	.28***	.16*	.01	.19**	.24***	.26***	.12*	.08	
Tiger	.11	.23***	.06	.48***	.65***	.30***	.16*	.04	.15*	.16*	.24***	.12	.02	
Cat	.15*	.13*	.10	.27***	.31***	.65***	.29***	.14*	.24***	−.03	.12*	.04	−.07	
Rabbit	.10	−.00	.04	.14*	.18**	.30***	.65***	.46***	.39***	.19**	.18**	.04	−.05	
Mouse	.00	−.12	−.02	.00	.06	.24***	.45***	.70***	.40***	.10	.17*	.12	−.00	
Raccoon	.20**	.11	.12*	.11	.13*	.22**	.34***	.34***	.69***	.08	.19**	.07	.04	
Horse	.09	.10	.13*	.19**	.14*	.04	.17**	.13*	.15*	.69***	.19**	.19**	.18**	
Bear	.00	.07	.07	.24***	.23***	.10	.15*	.15*	.26***	.27***	.63***	.23***	.18**	
Eagle	−.10	.01	−.09	.12*	.13*	.02	.04	.10	.12*	.16*	.18**	.73***	.31***	
Dragon	.02	.09	−.06	.08	.07	−.03	−.09	−.01	.06	.18**	.17*	.32***	.74***	

Boldface indicates correlations for which sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals of a particular species corresponded with sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal of that same species

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .005$ ; \*\*\* $p < .0001$

are similar in behavior and appearance to other canines such as foxes and dogs, and less similar to mice, bears, and dragons.

### Correlates of Autoanthropomorphozoophilia

We examined whether sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal was related to having a fursona, fursuiting, having ever considered the possibility of being another species or kind of animal, and having ever considered surgery to look more like another species or kind of animal. The general variable of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal was significantly and positively correlated with having a fursona, the latter categorical variable being treated as the same continuous measure that was previously described,  $r(332) = .24$ ,  $p < .0001$ . The general variable of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal was also significantly and positively correlated with the frequency of fursuiting in the past year,  $r(332) = .11$ ,  $p = .040$ , although the correlation was small. Nor did its association with participants' ever considering the possibility that they were another species or kind of animal reach conventional levels of significance,  $OR = 1.13$ ,  $p = .053$ . However, it was significantly and positively associated with participants' ever considering surgery to make themselves look more like another species or kind of animal,  $OR = 1.18$ ,  $p = .009$ .

Among participants sexually aroused by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal ( $n = 309$ ), 65.0% had

at least one fursona, 20.5% had ever fursuited, 12.6% had ever considered that they were another species or kind of animal, and 16.5% had ever considered surgery to make themselves look more like another species or kind of animal. Among participants who were not sexually aroused by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal ( $n = 25$ ), percentages were 48.0%, 12.5%, 4.0%, and 4.2%, respectively. None of the differences in percentages between the two groups were significant, all  $ps > .088$ .

### Narratives of Autoanthropomorphozoophilia

We present a few brief narratives from our participants that illustrate the conceptualization of autoanthropomorphozoophilia as an ETII. Each narrative is a selection from the responses that a participant provided for the open-ended questions. We edited the narratives for grammar, style, and concision, while preserving content.

The following two participants described the development of their fantasies related to being an anthropomorphic animal in a way that is consistent with the concept of ETIIs. The fantasies of the second participant also suggest the confluence of an ETII involving sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal and an ETII involving sexual arousal by the fantasy of being fat:

I watched cartoons in the nineties like Tiny Toon Adventures that were full of anthropomorphic animal

characters. I found them really interesting, and some of the female anthropomorphic animal characters made me aroused. I wanted to become an anthropomorphic animal and live in their world.

It was the early nineties. Garfield was still cool, and I was very interested in both fat people and the idea of being fat. I imagined that I was Garfield, a tubby cat, and I became aroused. I liked the idea of being a cartoon cat that was fat and fluffy. Later in my teenage years, I would seek out other overweight cartoon animals and become aroused imagining that I was them.

The following two participants described a variety of fantasies and behaviors related to being an anthropomorphic animal that could be motivated by an ETII, sexual masochism, or both. In both narratives, there was an emphasis on the actual transformation into an anthropomorphic animal or creature:

My most sexually arousing fantasy is being turned into a female anthropomorphic dog by a female anthropomorphic animal. I am then forced into sex slavery and raped on a daily basis. Another fantasy is being sprayed by a female anthropomorphic skunk and turning into one myself.

In my fantasies, I sometimes imagine myself as my fursona. At other times, I imagine myself with my fursona. My fantasies focus on being put into a mascot costume, being dressed in humiliating outfits (diapers or something feminine), being eaten or eating others, or being transformed into an anthropomorphic animal. For example, my most sexually arousing fantasy is being a Power Ranger who is defeated and captured by a big, puffy, and pink monster called the Impursonator. After being humiliated and then eaten by her, I am slowly encased in a big, puffy, and pink costume resembling her. More recently, I was put into a blue jay costume and masturbated while fantasizing about being a bird, unable to speak in anything but squawks.

### Furry Identity

Male respondents who identified as furies and were thus participants in the present study ( $n = 334$ ) may have differed from male respondents who did not so identify ( $n = 58$ ) in their sexual orientation, sexual motivation, and sexual interests related to ETIIs. If they differed in these respects, this suggests that sexuality is indeed related to furry identity or being a furry. If they did not differ, this might suggest that male respondents who did not identify as furies simply have not labeled themselves as such, similar to the way that some young men do not identify as gay despite experiencing sexual attraction only to men.

Male respondents who identified as furies scored higher on the Kinsey scale (i.e., reported more sexual feelings toward men), compared with those who did not so identify ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = 1.92$  vs.  $M = 2.38$ ,  $SD = 2.08$ ),  $t(390) = 3.54$ ,  $p = .0004$ . In addition, male respondents who identified as furies rated their interests in being furies ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ), in interacting with other furies ( $M = 2.31$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ), and in looking at furry artwork ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ) as no more sexual than did those who did not so identify ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ,  $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ , and  $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ , respectively), all  $ps > .053$ . They differed, however, on their ratings of the degree to which fursuited was sexual ( $M = 2.08$ ,  $SD = 1.30$  vs.  $M = 1.37$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ),  $p < .0001$ , on the composite variable of general sexual interest in being furies ( $M = 2.91$ ,  $SD = 0.86$  vs.  $M = 2.57$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ),  $t(390) = 2.70$ ,  $p = .007$ , and on the reported importance of fantasizing about being or dressing as anthropomorphic animals during masturbation ( $M = 2.29$ ,  $SD = 1.41$  vs.  $M = 1.50$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ),  $t(104) = 5.24$ ,  $p < .0001$ , with respondents who identified as furies scoring higher. Furry-identified respondents also reported a higher degree of sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals using the general variable ( $M = 8.50$ ,  $SD = 2.05$  vs.  $M = 7.19$ ,  $SD = 3.18$ ),  $t(65.4) = 3.05$ ,  $p = .003$ , and a higher degree of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal using the general variable ( $M = 7.39$ ,  $SD = 3.28$  vs.  $M = 4.59$ ,  $SD = 3.93$ ),  $t(71.4) = 5.13$ ,  $p < .0001$ . The two groups did not differ significantly in age ( $M_{age} = 22.47$  years,  $SD = 4.72$  vs.  $M_{age} = 21.31$  years,  $SD = 4.87$ ),  $t(390) = 1.72$ ,  $p = .087$ . Because several clear differences were found between those who did and did not identify as furies in their sexual orientation, sexual motivation, and sexual interests related to ETIIs, sexuality appears to be salient to the identity or experience of being a furry.

### Discussion

The results of our study provide clear answers to two major questions about male furies: To what extent are they sexually motivated, and why?

Our participants tended to report sexual interest in being furies. Some interests related to being a furry, such as interacting with other furies and fursuited, were less sexual than others, such as looking at furry artwork or other media. Still, the vast majority of participants (99.4%) reported some degree of sexual interest in being furies and thus some degree of sexual motivation.

Regarding an explanation of their sexual motivation, participants tended to report a pattern of sexual interests that was consistent with the concept of ETIIs. Specifically, they overwhelmingly reported both sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal. Their ratings of sexual



arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal (autoanthropomorphozoophilia) also greatly exceeded those of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being either a real animal (autozoophilia) or a woman (autogynephilia) in both prevalence and degree. Finally, participants found it especially sexually arousing to fantasize about being the same kinds of anthropomorphic animals to whom they were sexually attracted, with respect to gender and species. That is, a male furry who was most sexually attracted to male anthropomorphic animals and anthropomorphic lions was most likely to be sexually aroused by the fantasy of being a male anthropomorphic animal and an anthropomorphic lion, relative to anthropomorphic animals of other genders and species. Thus, our results are consistent with the idea that many male furies are sexually motivated and by an ETII, namely autoanthropomorphozoophilia. Male furies who are motivated by autoanthropomorphozoophilia have internalized their sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals and thus are sexually aroused by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal.

Further evidence for sexual motivation and an ETII explanation in male furies comes from the comparisons of male respondents who identified as furies with those who did not so identify. Several clear differences in sexual orientation, sexual motivation, and sexual interests related to ETIIs indicated a greater role of sexuality for furry-identified respondents.

In our sample of male furies, autoanthropomorphozoophilia seemed primarily limited to sexual fantasy and ideation about fursonas. Contrary to portrayals of furies in the media and popular culture, fursuiting was relatively uncommon, with only one-fifth of the sample ever having engaged in that activity. Indeed, although sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal was positively associated with both fursuiting and having a fursona among participants, the correlation with fursuiting was less than half the magnitude of that with having a fursona. Furthermore, correlations with both of these popularized aspects of being a furry were surprisingly weak. It seems that fursuiting among male furies might be conceptually analogous to cross-dressing among autogynephilic men, because both activities involve changing one's appearance and behavior to become more like his preferred erotic target: an anthropomorphic animal or a woman, respectively. Because autoanthropomorphozoophilia and fursuiting were not strongly associated, however, future research is needed to clarify the nature of this association. In contrast, the association between autogynephilia and cross-dressing has been well established (Bailey, 2003; Blanchard, 1991; Blanchard et al., 1986; Hsu et al., 2015, 2017; Lawrence, 2013).

Similar to past samples of predominantly male furies (e.g., Evans, 2008; Gerbasi et al., 2008; Plante et al., 2011; Satinsky & Green, 2016), our sample of male furies was likely to have non-heterosexual (84.1%), especially bisexual

(42.8%), identities and to provide Kinsey scores consistent with these identities. In addition to reporting sexual attraction to both women and men, many more in our sample (73.4%) reported sexual attraction to both female and male anthropomorphic animals, including some who identified as heterosexual/straight or homosexual/gay. Although bisexual identity and current sexual feelings were common among participants, 32 of the 44 (72.7%) bisexual participants who were in a relationship reported that their romantic partner was another man, with 24 of the 32 (75.0%) reporting that they met their romantic partner over their mutual interest in being furies or as part of the furry community. Given these two observations, we speculate that perhaps bisexual male furies might usually be with male romantic partners because there are far fewer female furies, and male furies are just as capable as female furies of sharing and fulfilling sexual interests related to anthropomorphic animals or being a furry (i.e., by enacting their fursona or by fursuiting), if not more eager to do so. This possibility was raised by a furry in an interview conducted as part of a study by Satinsky and Green (2016).

Despite the high prevalence and degree of sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal in our sample of male furies, these sexual interests have long eluded the scientific literature. At least four factors may have contributed to their lack of scientific attention. First, both sexual interests are probably rare in the general population, even if they appear to be common among male furies. Second, furies have only recently gained significant public attention with the advent of the Internet, depictions in the media (e.g., Gurley, 2001; Zuiker et al., 2003), and increasing attendance at furry conventions. Third, sexuality is usually studied within a conventional framework, in which sexual orientation is considered relative attraction to men versus women. Deviations from this conventional framework usually involve research on pedophilia or sexual violence, with an aim to prevent sexual offending. Finally, the concept of ETIIs has been difficult to grasp for many scientists, clinicians, and laypeople, even when it is helpful for understanding otherwise puzzling phenomena, such as heterosexual male cross-dressers, men who desire limb amputation, and now male furies.

## Limitations

Several important limitations of our study require its cautious interpretation. Most importantly, it is impossible to recruit furies randomly or representatively, whether from a furry convention or from online Web sites. As a result, we cannot know the extent to which our findings generalize to the population of all male furies. We recruited participants from a variety of sources differing in their emphasis of erotic content. Furthermore, our recruitment materials emphasized our intention to primarily study the sexuality of

male furies, and our questionnaire mostly assessed sexuality. For these reasons, our sample of male furies may have been biased toward those who were sexually motivated and non-heterosexual. There is no way to know this for certain, unfortunately, and we acknowledge that our sample may not represent male furies in general. Accepting this limitation, it remains clear that there exist many male furies who do report sexual motivation, as well as many who report sexual interests that are consistent with the concept of ETIIs. Moreover, the preponderance of non-heterosexual identities and sexual feelings among our sample of male furies is striking. Although our findings cannot tell us whether any individual male furry is sexually motivated or non-heterosexual, they tell us that the number of male furies who are either sexually motivated or non-heterosexual is not trivial.

Another limitation of our study is that we did not carefully assess alternative explanations for why furies might be motivated besides sexuality. Social motivation is one plausible alternative, as previous studies have suggested that furies tend to value their furry identity and draw significant social support from the furry community (Mock et al., 2013; Reysen et al., 2016; Roberts et al., 2015). Furies may also be motivated by a non-sexual interest in anthropomorphic animals and in being an anthropomorphic animal. Participants who did not believe that their primary motivation for being furies was sexual provided alternative motivations in open-ended responses. The most common responses were consistent with social motivation, and the next most common responses were consistent with non-sexual interest in anthropomorphic animals and in being an anthropomorphic animal. However, nearly half of the sample did not provide responses or confirmed that their interest in being furies was primarily sexual. The large majority of participants also endorsed some degree of sexual interest related to being a furry. Furthermore, participants most commonly reported that they became furies in the context of online pornography featuring anthropomorphic animals. Thus, our results most strongly support the idea that male furies tend to be sexually motivated, but some are also motivated by social or other non-sexual reasons. This conclusion is similar to what we proposed in the introduction and also to the conclusion reached by Soh and Cantor (2015).

We address one final limitation of our study that is related to the previous: We did not carefully assess alternative explanations for sexual motivation besides an ETII. In theory, masochism could be one such alternative. Indeed, there were clear masochistic themes in the last two narratives of autoanthropomorphozoophilia that we presented, which included fantasies of transforming into an anthropomorphic animal that involved rape, force, pain, or humiliation. Freund and Blanchard (1993) discussed the possibility that some fantasies that appear to be motivated by ETIIs are in fact motivated by masochism. Fantasies motivated by masochism emphasize

the physical and behavioral differences between a man and his preferred erotic target (e.g., women), thereby increasing feelings of submissiveness. Fantasies motivated by an ETII, in contrast, emphasize the physical and behavioral similarities between a man and his preferred erotic target. Based on these criteria, the last two narratives do not clearly represent fantasies motivated by either masochism or an ETII alone. For some male furies, sexual motivation may be explained by both masochism and an ETII. Because participants tended to endorse a high degree of sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal ( $M = 7.39$  out of 10.00,  $SD = 3.28$ ), the concept of ETIIs is a more likely explanation for sexual motivation than masochism is. Our findings that male furies tended to be sexually aroused by the fantasy of being the same kinds of anthropomorphic animals to whom they were sexually attracted, with respect to gender and species, are also much more easily explained by an ETII than by masochism.

## Conclusions

Our study characterized the sexual orientation, sexual motivation, and sexual interests of male furies, but it was largely exploratory and had important limitations. Future research on the sexuality of furies may benefit from more careful assessment of possible alternative motivations for being furies and possible alternative explanations for sexual motivation. If future research converges with our findings regarding sexual motivation by an ETII, it would be important to examine how ETIIs like autoanthropomorphozoophilia develop in furies. Future research may also benefit from recruiting samples in ways that are different from our approach, such as recruiting specifically for female furies and those who do not endorse sexual motivation. No sample of furies will truly be representative, however.

We anticipate that some results from our study might be used to perpetuate the existing stigma against furies. In particular, some individuals might try to use our study to further stigmatize furies for having unusual sexual interests, such as sexual attraction to anthropomorphic animals and sexual arousal by the fantasy of being an anthropomorphic animal. However, we emphasize that neither of these sexual interests is even potentially harmful, because anthropomorphic animals are not real. Furthermore, we found little evidence that male furies are especially sexually attracted to real animals (i.e., have zoophilia), which could result in actual harm if these attractions were acted out. Although many in our sample reported some degree of sexual attraction to real animals, the average intensity was low.

We believe that it is unfortunate that furies are stigmatized for having unusual sexual interests, but we doubt that this stigma will change without open and honest discourse. We cannot have open and honest discourse by denying the

existence of the many furies who are sexually motivated and have unusual sexual interests. By studying sexual motivation and unusual sexual interests in furies, we will better understand their role and importance. Perhaps then, both furies and our larger society will no longer find them shameful. That would be a good result, in our opinion.

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## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

**Human and Animal Rights** All procedures performed in this study were approved and in accordance with the ethical standards of Northwestern University’s Institutional Review Board for research involving human participants.

**Informed Consent** Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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